



2009



National Endowment for the Arts

2009



NOVEMBER 14, 2009

SIDNEY HARMAN HALL

HARMAN CENTER FOR THE ARTS

WASHINGTON, DC

This event is made possible in part through the
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Welcome from Rocco Landesman Chairman, NEA



Photo by Michael Eastman

Through an act of Congress, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) honors artists in opera who are at the top of their games. I am proud to lead the charge in recognizing the 2009 NEA Opera Honorees.

One of the first programs I learned about when I arrived at the Arts Endowment in August was the upcoming NEA Opera Honors. I was delighted to learn that the NEA pays tribute to American artists who have dedicated their careers to creating, directing, performing, conducting, and operating within one of the most demanding art forms in this or any other country: opera.

As a man of the theater, I understand fully the capacity that opera demands. Even the smallest opera production demands an orchestra, principal singers, a chorus, and dancers, as well as the creative forces of the theater: set, costume, lighting designers, and stage directors to bring all the disparate parts together into one carefully crafted production. Opera is the marriage of voice, instruments, dance, theater, and design. It is one of the most complicated art forms created—and these five honorees have taken opera in the United States to new levels.

Art is a part of the U.S. cultural landscape. Artists are part of the fabric of this country and help us to define who we are, collectively, as a society. More than this, *art works*. Artists play a role in the economy of the towns and cities in which we dwell. The Arts Endowment supports the creative spirit from incubation to polished performance.

Through the NEA Opera Honors, we continue the NEA's recognition of the opera art form, which began nearly 45 years ago with our earliest grant awards. Now in its second year, the NEA Opera Honors continues the agency's commitment to honoring lifetime achievement in the arts, as we have done for over a quarter century through the NEA Jazz Masters and the NEA National Heritage Fellowships.

I welcome your comments about this program and your nominations for future opera artists to be honored through the NEA Opera Honors.

Greetings from OPERA America and Washington National Opera

The NEA Opera Honors document opera's essential place in the American cultural landscape. Opera is a multimedia art form that thrives in a multimedia world.

More than two-thirds of the opera companies in existence today were established after 1960—half of them after 1970.

Such rapid growth was fueled by innovative stagings that revealed the dramatic power of the art form. The introduction of projected translations in the mid-1980s helped audiences overcome the barrier of language that had inhibited enthusiasm for a multilingual art form.

Only a generation ago, aspiring American performing artists had to travel to Europe to gain experience before being considered for major productions in this country. Thanks to outstanding university opera programs, conservatories, and training programs, American artists today are among the most well-trained and versatile in the world.

Productions of operas by American composers were almost unheard of in the decades following World War II, putting opera at risk of becoming a "museum art form." Responding to this risk, companies began to commission and produce new American works, exemplified by the New York City Opera and its historic "American" seasons. Today, U.S. opera companies premiere between 10 and 20 new operas every season and offer productions of existing American works from an American repertoire.

This year, OPERA America members are working together to celebrate the 2009 NEA Opera Honors recipients and to demonstrate opera's vitality and accessibility during the first-ever National Opera Week. Nearly 100 opera companies and educational institutions will offer free programs to the public, including open rehearsals, backstage tours, and public performances. Opera in America is thriving, thanks to the dedication of leaders across the country and the pioneering work of this year's NEA Opera Honorees.



Photo by Dario Acosta

It is a great pleasure and privilege for all of us at the Washington National Opera to be part of the second NEA Opera Honors. This important celebration honors great individuals who have made a commitment to further opera in the United States.

This year's honorees, John Adams, Frank Corsaro, Marilyn Horne, Lotfi Mansouri, and Julius Rudel, not only have inspired others throughout their careers but are models for future generations.

Washington National Opera is dedicated to building on opera's rich history by offering productions of the highest artistic quality, balancing popular grand opera with new and infrequently performed works, developing the careers of young singers, and serving as a vital resource throughout the Washington, DC metropolitan area through the company's award-winning education and community outreach programs.

All of this evening's honorees have helped to make opera special for millions of people throughout the world. Tonight, while we celebrate their lives and careers, we also will look to them for inspiration as we work towards opera's glorious future.



Photo by Debi Fox

Plácido Domingo
General Director, Washington National Opera

Marc A. Scorca
President and CEO, OPERA America

NEA Opera Honors Overview

The NEA Opera Honors were established by Congressional appropriation in 2008. This award, recognizing individuals for their lifelong contributions to the arts, is the first to be instituted by the National Endowment for the Arts in more than 25 years. This program joins two well-established lifetime honors programs at the Arts Endowment: the NEA Jazz Masters and NEA National Heritage Fellowships.

The inaugural class of NEA Opera Honorees comprised composer Carlisle Floyd, general director Richard Gaddes, conductor James Levine, and soprano Leontyne Price. Produced in partnership with OPERA America and the Washington National Opera, the inaugural awards concert encompassed musical performances, video documentaries, and personal tributes from fellow artists. Leontyne Price's unanticipated a cappella performance of "America, the Beautiful" at the first NEA Opera Awards was cited by *Washington Post* classical music critic Anne Midgette as the number one musical event of 2008.

This year, 2009, marks the second annual NEA Opera Honors, and with it, our acknowledgment and celebration of a new group of master artists. The centerpiece of the NEA Opera Honors is an awards event on November 14, 2009, at the Harman Center for the Arts in Washington, DC.

This year's awards acknowledge the careers of a composer, stage director and librettist, singer, general director, and conductor.

John Adams is one of the leading opera composers, renowned for works such as *Nixon in China*, *The Death of Klinghoffer*, and most recently, *Doctor Atomic*. As a stage director and librettist, Frank Corsaro is known for creating brilliant productions during his decades-long association with the New York City Opera and is recognized as one of the first directors to incorporate multimedia elements into opera productions. As a singer, mezzo-soprano Marilyn Horne has performed in all major U.S. opera houses and has been instrumental in the development of young singers. General director Lotfi Mansouri spent more than a decade at the helm of the San Francisco Opera, and also is recognized for pioneering the use of supertitles, forever

changing the landscape of opera for audiences worldwide. Conductor Julius Rudel's relationship with the New York City Opera spans 37 years, and he also holds a place in the history books as being the first artistic director of the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

Each of these artists has had a profound influence on generations of singers, composers, directors, and audiences. Their talents have contributed in untold ways to the landscape of opera in the United States.

As we observe these awards, we are joined by audiences at opera houses throughout the nation for the first OPERA America salute to National Opera Week through a series of week-long events taking place in approximately 100 communities nationwide. The centerpiece of National Opera Week is the NEA Opera Honors awards event in Washington, DC.

Opera in America continues to be the composite of American stories shared through music and in song. We acknowledge the 2009 recipients of the NEA Opera Honors for their individual and collective stories that continue to nurture our American culture.



2008 NEA Opera Honoree Leontyne Price is moved to song during her award acceptance at the awards ceremony at the Harman Center for the Arts in Washington, DC.

Photo by Henry Grossman

The American Opera Singer: Five Pathbreakers

By Peter G. Davis

No country has a monopoly on outstanding opera singers in our global society. Today, great voices can come from anywhere—and they do. Connoisseurs may regret the disappearance of the distinctive national singing styles that once defined the vocal scene more than a century ago, but the sophisticated cosmopolitan approach that now prevails has its compensations. Professional standards of operatic performance have never been higher, and American singers, with their thorough training, technical facility, athletic good looks, stylistic flexibility, keen sense of theater, and can-do enthusiasm, play a prominent part in making the international mix so successful.

This was not always the case, and the emergence of the American singer as a major force in opera is a comparatively recent phenomenon. European settlers may have begun to populate the North American continent in quantity around four hundred years ago, just when opera was actually being invented in Italy, but staging musical dramas in Italian or any other language was about the last thing these pioneers had on their minds. Even as urban centers gradually arose and cultural institutions developed, opera remained essentially a source for bowdlerized musical theatricals or catchy tunes rearranged as popular songs in the vernacular. In fact, America did not experience a fully staged opera in its original language and performed by professionally trained singers until November 29, 1825. On that evening, in New York City's Park Theatre, a touring troupe from Europe headed by the famous Spanish singer Manuel García offered Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, an opera in which García himself had created the leading tenor role of Count Almaviva nine years earlier.

That performance may not have changed the American operatic scene over night, but it did set the tone. Opera, most people decided, was a glittering imported bauble unavailable to common folk, and certainly not a proper occupation for young Americans struggling to develop a growing country. That attitude was reinforced by whirlwind visits by potent vocal personalities from Europe, beginning

Lillian Nordica •



Lillian Nordica as Kundry in Richard Wagner's *Parsifal*.
Photo courtesy of Metropolitan Opera Archives

with García's teenage daughter, Maria, who sang Rosina in *Il Barbiere* and would later conquer Europe as the fabled Maria Malibran. A generation later, heavily promoted by P.T. Barnum, Jenny Lind took the country by storm. They and other charismatic singers from abroad may have heightened America's appreciation for classically trained operatic voices and helped popularize operatic music, but they invariably left the impression that American singers were second-best.

On the other hand, such singers as Malibran, Lind, and later Adelina Patti also served as potent role models, particularly for a young girl. If she were from upscale surroundings, she would probably have been encouraged to sing around the family parlor piano, and even perhaps be given rudimentary voice training. No wonder those who showed musical talent began to dream that the glamour, celebrity, and riches of these famous singers from Europe might possibly be theirs as well.

Only the most ambitious and fiercely motivated young ladies made the nervy decision to pursue a career as a singer. After all, the problems they faced were formidable: finding proper vocal instruction, dealing with the limitations and instability of early performance organizations, and putting up with the hardships of overland travel, not to mention the prevailing puritanical nineteenth-century

attitude that singing on the stage was only fit for fallen women. Despite these obstacles, a surprising number took the plunge and fought the hard fight. Only a few managed to make a name, and even fewer came close to winning the fame and wealth of a Lind or a Patti, but such hardy pioneers as Clara Louise Kellogg (1842–1916), Emma Abbott (1850–1891), and Minnie Hauk (1851–1929) all won a degree of success and proved that it could be done.

Soon conditions were favorable for an important American voice to develop its full potential and find international recognition. Born in 1857 as a farmer's daughter in Maine, Lillian Norton was an unlikely candidate, but by the 1890s, as Lillian Nordica, she had everything a diva could wish for: world-wide engagements, a private railroad car, closets of magnificent gowns, and the adoration of the musical elite of Europe and America. And no American singer before or after Nordica applied more determination, hard work, and sheer Yankee grit to achieve her goals, eventually disciplining what was considered to be one of the era's most glorious voices into a versatile instrument that ranged with equal brilliance through Mozart's *Queen of the Night* to Wagner's *Isolde*. Two days before her 57th birthday, as she lay dying in Jakarta from a fever caught during a grueling South Seas tour, Nordica pronounced her own epitaph: "She did her damndest!"

Of course it is difficult to imagine how Nordica must have sounded to her contemporaries—even the handful of recordings she left can only suggest her vocal impact. The primitive acoustical process was generally unflattering for large, voluptuous voices like Nordica's, but when heard live and unfurled into a large space the effect must have been overwhelming. After her first *Isolde* at the Metropolitan Opera in 1895, one critic said her voice "rang out with thrilling clearness, power and accuracy." Another wrote: "Let no one speak of Mme. Nordica as merely a beautiful singer hereafter. Her *Isolde* stamps her as one of the greatest lyric artists of the day." Nordica's exceptional voice, world-wide travels, glamorous triumphs, diverse repertory, and ability to compete comfortably with her European peers made her an American anomaly at the time. Many more were to follow in her footsteps.

Nordica was primarily a vocal phenomenon and, one suspects, not an especially compelling stage presence. Times were changing however, and with the rise of Puccini and his contemporaries, singing actresses were needed to tap the full potential of such sensational new heroines as *Tosca* and *Madama Butterfly*. America met the challenge in the person of Geraldine Farrar (1882–1967), one of the most glamorous and talked about opera singers of her generation. Farrar was a bewitching dark beauty who made



Geraldine Farrar in the Metropolitan Opera's performance of *Königskinder* (*The King's Children*). Photo courtesy of the Metropolitan Opera Archives

news whatever she did. And everyone wanted to know the steamy details, from her Berlin liaison with Kaiser Wilhelm's son, to her much-discussed affair at the Met with Toscanini, to her tempestuous marriage to Hollywood actor Lou Tellegen while spending her summers out west making silent movies for Cecil B. DeMille.

Despite all the tabloid publicity, Farrar had more than enough voice and old-school vocal training in Europe to be remembered today primarily for her operatic roles, *Butterfly* in particular. Never interested in being simply a canary bird à la Patti, Farrar realized that the modern repertory demanded, as she once wrote, "passionate acting, for energetic synchronization of music and physical action." And this she supplied, ruling the Metropolitan stage from the year of her debut as Gounod's Juliette in 1906 to her theatrical farewell as Leoncavallo's Zazà in 1922, after which her fans dragged her limousine up Broadway into Times Square. Farrar may have been American opera's first dazzling media personality, but she also had the voice to go with it, as may still be heard in recordings that display the clean, fearless attack and sheer vitality of her singing. Her singular combination of looks, brains, vocal honesty, and provocative stage presence were traits that were quickly becoming distinctive features of the American opera singer.

Learning and absorbing different vocal styles in order to express them naturally and spontaneously has been a constant challenge for American singers, who, unlike their colleagues from Europe, were not born into a living operatic tradition. For Rosa Ponselle (1897–1981), the daughter of Neapolitan immigrants, those instincts must have been inborn—when she first sang for Enrico Caruso, also from Naples, the great tenor remarked that she not only looked



Rosa Ponselle in the title role in Vincenzo Bellini's *Norma*.

Photo courtesy of Metropolitan Opera Archives

like him but sang like him. Ponselle was literally a force of nature whose voice was accurately described by James Huneker in the *New York Times* after her surprise Metropolitan debut at age 21 in 1918 as Leonora in *La Forza del Destino*: "Vocal gold," Huneker wrote, with "its luscious lower and middle tones, dark rich and ductile" yet "brilliant and flexible in the upper register." Soon Ponselle was being called a Caruso in petticoats.

Ponselle retained that characteristic vocal quality virtually until the day she died, although her stage career was all too short, ending in 1937. Had she been born into a later generation, Ponselle would surely have entrusted her "vocal gold" to rigorous early training and stage experience rather than growing up on the wing as she did, getting her first taste of public performance in vaudeville. One has the feeling that she never did quite understand how she made those glorious sounds, which led to increasing bouts of insecurity and stage fright. Eventually Ponselle retired to her Villa Pace estate outside Baltimore, singing for friends and making private recordings that show no loss of voluptuous tone

or the intuitive energy she brought to her chosen repertory. Surely the country had never produced a greater natural voice. Some called her singing provincial and deficient in classical technique, but others heard it as an exciting re-imagination of classic Italian opera—Maria Callas, for one, who once called Ponselle “the greatest singer of us all.” It would probably have lasted longer in a more stably organized operatic world in which instinctive talents are allowed time to mature and acquire more self-confidence.

So far the history of the American singer has been essentially a feminist story. There were youths who occasionally felt the call, but society on a whole regarded the profession as an unfit pursuit for a man—even a pointless one, considering the many profitable male careers available in a young country with so many resources to exploit. Lawrence Tibbett (1896–1960) had several worthy predecessors, but he was the country’s first true superstar male singer. And he became one in the way Americans liked it: overnight, when, as a virtual unknown, he brought down the house at the Metropolitan Opera on January 2, 1925, after singing Ford’s monologue in Verdi’s *Falstaff*. All of Tibbett’s special qualities were unleashed that night: the powerful rock solid tone, easy upper extension, vivid verbal projection, and theatrical presence of a man born for the stage.

The son of a California sheriff, Tibbett virtually invented himself, and his image as a typical all-round American boy from way out West was one that helped him find his audience and fuel his rise to fame and fortune. His success was further facilitated by the advent of talking pictures, and the whole country flocked to see the dashing young man with the gorgeous baritone voice in musicals such as *The Rogue Song*. Records, radio work, recitals, films—Tibbett was active in every medium, but the Met remained the center of his musical life as he added one role after another.



Lawrence Tibbett as Tonio in Ruggero Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*.
Photo courtesy of Metropolitan Opera Archives



Marian Anderson at the 1939 Lincoln Memorial recital. Photo courtesy of Scurlock Studio Records, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution

Verdi was his specialty, and Tibbett can truly be said to have established a school of American Verdi baritones, a noble tradition carried on by Leonard Warren, Robert Merrill, Cornell MacNeil, and Sherrill Milnes.

The rise of the black American singer tells a different story, running parallel to that of their white colleagues but one with its own special challenges and texture. When Marian Anderson (1897–1993) first dreamed of a career singing in concert and opera, the idea must have seemed futile. There had been black singers before her, but poverty, prejudice, poor education, and social rejection remained formidable obstacles that constantly impeded their progress. Anderson conquered all that with the help of excellent teachers, early recognition in Scandinavia, the support of such influential figures as Arturo Toscanini and Sol Hurok, and of course the rich, wide-ranging eloquence of a voice that seemed to emanate from the very center of her being. Even at that, Anderson was not completely accepted in America until she reached the age of 38, after a triumphant concert in New York's Town Hall on December 30, 1935.

What made Anderson truly an icon and a living symbol of racial equality was the recital she sang on Easter Sunday, April 9, 1939, on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC. The concert was hastily arranged, as it was initially intended to occur at Constitution Hall. The

Daughters of the American Revolution, however, refused to make the venue available to her. This prompted First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt to secure a new venue on the National Mall, where Anderson performed before an audience of 75,000 people. On that occasion and in the many recitals to come, audiences found her serene simplicity and the quiet, almost elemental dramatic force of her presence utterly hypnotic. Although vocally reduced by the time she made her Metropolitan Opera debut as Ulrica in Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera* in 1955, Anderson made history again as the first black singer to appear in a leading role at the Met.

Becoming an opera singer in America may no longer be quite the risky adventure it was when Nordica, Farrar, Ponselle, Tibbett, and Anderson followed their stars. Those great singers and questing personalities prepared the way for the dozens of Americans who flourish today and add their own distinctive voices to an exciting and thriving global art form.

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Peter G. Davis is the author of *The American Opera Singer* (Doubleday) and is currently a contributor to the *New York Times* and *Opera News*.

2009
NEA Opera Honors
Recipients





John Adams

When I was a young composer, my first orchestra work was funded by a small grant from the NEA, support that came at a critical moment in my creative life. Thirty years later, and having composed five operas, I find myself once again thanking the Endowment for its encouragement and for maintaining the tradition of American classical music.

John Adams has transformed the fabric of opera with intellectual and emotional intensity. In a musical style rooted in minimalism, but utterly and powerfully his own, he confronts the conundrums and moral complexities of our time—and dares audiences to do the same.

Adams was born in Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1947. By the age of 13, already an accomplished clarinetist, he was determined to be a composer. After graduating from Harvard, he left New England (which still informs his work) and moved to northern California, where he quickly became part of the thriving new-music scene.

Initially, Adams was an instrumental composer. At the time the Houston Grand Opera commissioned his first opera, *Nixon in China*, which premiered in 1987, Adams had never written for solo voice. Since then he has written three more operas, *The Death of Klinghoffer* (1991), *Doctor Atomic* (2005), and *A Flowering Tree* (2006), as well as the song

Opposite: Gerald Finley as J. Robert Oppenheimer in John Adams' *Doctor Atomic*. Photo by Nick Heavican/Metropolitan Opera

Above: John Adams at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Photo courtesy of San Francisco Conservatory of Music

cycle *The Wound-Dresser* (1989), the “songplay” *I Was Looking at the Ceiling and Then I Saw the Sky* (1995), and the Nativity oratorio *El Niño* (2000). *Nixon in China* has become one of the most frequently presented operas of our time, and *Doctor Atomic* has already been seen on five major international stages.

Among his wide-ranging orchestral works are *Shaker Loops* (1983), a violin concerto (1993), the Pulitzer Prize-winning *On the Transmigration of Souls* (2002), *My Father Knew Charles Ives* (2003), and *Son of Chamber Symphony* (2007), which is also the music for Mark Morris’s ballet *Joyride* (2008). A number of leading choreographers—including Morris, Peter Martins, and Rebecca Rice—have set dances to music by Adams.

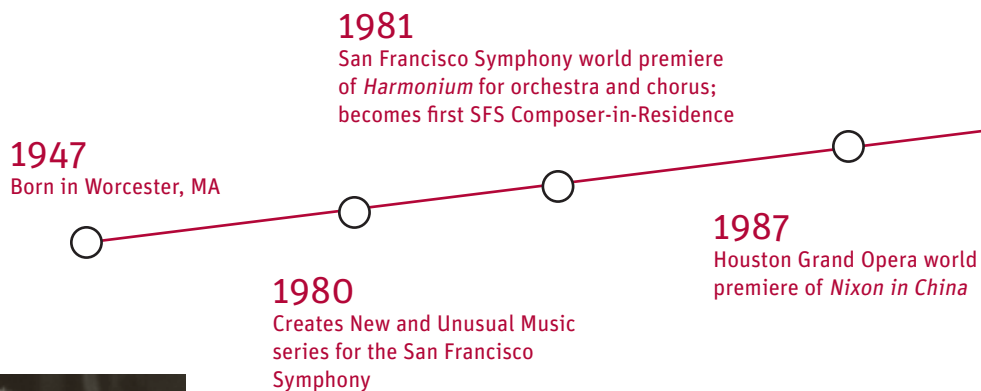
Adams, who is also a guest conductor with orchestras in the United States and Europe, has been an innovative force within many musical organizations. He instituted the renowned New and Unusual Music series at the San Francisco

Symphony, where he was also composer-in-residence from 1982–1985. He wrote several of his most important orchestral works for that orchestra, including *Harmonium* (1981), *Harmonielehre* (1985), and *El Dorado* (1991). Adams has served as creative chair for the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, as music director of the Cabrillo Festival, and as artist-in-association with the BBC Symphony Orchestra. While holding the Richard and Barbara Debs Composer’s Chair at Carnegie Hall (2003–2007), he established the In Your Ear festival and conducted the first public concert at Carnegie’s new Zankel Hall. Currently, he serves as creative chair for the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

Adams made his literary debut last year with a volume of memoirs and commentary on American musical life, entitled *Hallelujah Junction* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2008). ■



John Adams during a discussion at Harvard University in 2007. Photo by Jon Chase/Harvard University News Office



John Adams with John DeMain discussing Houston Grand Opera’s production of *Nixon in China*, 1987. Photo courtesy of Houston Grand Opera



The Chicago Opera Theater's 2006 production of *Nixon in China*. Photo by Steven Kagan, courtesy of Chicago Opera Theater

1991

La Monnaie, Brussels, world premiere of *The Death of Klinghoffer*

2000

Théâtre du Châtelet, Paris, world premiere of *El Niño*, a Nativity oratorio

2005

San Francisco Opera world premiere of *Doctor Atomic*

1995

University of California, Berkeley, world premiere of the songplay *I Was Looking at the Ceiling and Then I Saw the Sky*

2003

On the Transmigration of Souls, a work commissioned by the New York Philharmonic to commemorate those killed in the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center, wins Pulitzer Prize

2006

MuseumsQuartier, Vienna, world premiere of *A Flowering Tree*

Selected CDs/DVDs Currently in Circulation

John Adams composed all selections.

The Death of Klinghoffer (Elektra/Nonesuch) with Maddalena, Perry, Young, Sylvan, Hammons, Felty, Friedman, Nadler; conducted by Nagano

Doctor Atomic (BBC/Opus Arte/DVD) with Finley, Rivera, Owens, Fink, Maddalena; conducted by Renes

A Flowering Tree (Nonesuch) with Owens, Rivera, Thomas; conducted by Adams

El Niño (Nonesuch) with Upshaw, Hunt Lieberson, White; conducted by Nagano

Nixon in China (Nonesuch) with Maddalena, Sylvan, Hammons, Duykers, Page, Craney; conducted by de Waart

The Wound-Dresser (Nonesuch) with Sylvan; conducted by Adams





Frank Corsaro

In 1958, I was invited by Julius Rudel to direct my first opera, Carlisle Floyd's magical Susannah. What happened in Susannah and several other productions in that New York City Opera (NYCO) season on 55th Street heralded something new on the horizon. With the NYCO's move to more spacious quarters, the marines of change landed squarely at Lincoln Center. Under the guidance of a small group of young directors, with theater backgrounds in their blood, singing and hearing were conjoined, bringing new life into the operatic repertoire. I am very grateful to the National Endowment [for the Arts] for paying respect and even homage to this amazing transformation. By honoring me today, they have opened the door to equally deserving colleagues in the directing field.

For more than half a century, Frank Corsaro has brought his keen director's eye to countless opera productions, always displaying a rare understanding for the balance of words, music, and theater.

Corsaro, who was born in New York City in 1924, began his career as an actor but turned to directing because it better served his imagination. He became involved with the Actors Studio (which he went on to direct), and in 1955 he directed Michael Gazzo's powerful drama of a war veteran's heroin addiction, *A Hatful of Rain*, which ran for two years on Broadway. Julius Rudel invited Corsaro to direct Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah* at the New York City Opera in 1958. Though the production was a huge success, it was some time before Corsaro returned to opera, in the interim directing, among other things, the Broadway

Above: Frank Corsaro directing Mozart's *The Magic Flute* at the Houston Grand Opera.
Photo courtesy of Houston Grand Opera

Opposite: The Fort Worth Opera's production of Thomas Pasatieri's *Frau Margot*, for which Frank Corsaro directed and wrote the libretto.
Photo by Ellen Appel

premiere of Tennessee Williams' play *The Night of the Iguana*, starring Bette Davis. But return Corsaro did, and he has had a long, rich association with City Opera as well as with Carlisle Floyd, with whom he has worked at many companies.

At City Opera, Corsaro's legendary productions—many of which are still discussed—helped secure the company's reputation for artistic daring. He brought new life to traditional fare such as Verdi's *La Traviata* and Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, in part through his emphasis on realism. He worked similar magic with contemporary or lesser-known works, including Hoiby's *Summer and Smoke*, Korngold's *Die Tote Stadt*, Prokofiev's *The Fiery Angel*, and Ward's *The Crucible*. In fact, treating opera as theater has been so central to Corsaro's work that he has referred to himself as "the Grandpa Moses of opera."

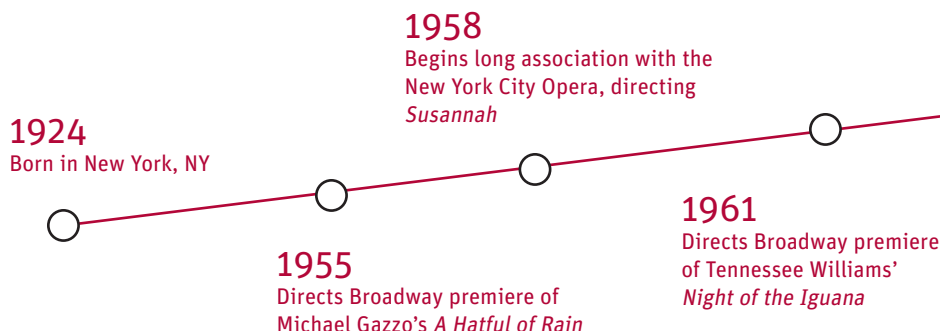
Corsaro has worked with major companies in the United States and abroad, and has had two particularly interesting creative partnerships. One is with Floyd, with whom he has worked on many occasions.

The other is with the writer and illustrator Maurice Sendak. Their imaginative productions include Prokofiev's *Love for Three Oranges*, Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen*, Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*, Ravel's *L'Heure Espagnole* and *L'Enfant et Les Sortilèges*, and Knussen's *Where the Wild Things Are*.

Corsaro was the artistic director of the Juilliard Opera Center from 1988 to 2007. In addition to teaching at Juilliard, he directed a heady mix of operas throughout the United States and Europe, among them Monteverdi's *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, Verdi's *Falstaff*, Vaughn Williams's *Hugh the Drover*, Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and Poulenc's *La Voix Humaine*. In a rich cross-fertilization, he has always moved easily between theater and opera. But he also has enriched opera in another way, as the librettist for such works as *Heloise and Abelard* by Stephen Paulus, and Thomas Pasatieri's *Frau Margot* and *Before Breakfast*. ■



Marilyn Horne in the Met premiere of Handel's *Rinaldo*, directed by Frank Corsaro. Photo by Winnie Klotz/Metropolitan Opera



Frank Corsaro (right) discussing with Maurice Sendak the production of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. Photo courtesy of Houston Grand Opera



The Los Angeles Opera's production of Knussen's *Where the Wild Things Are*. Photo courtesy of Los Angeles Opera

1970

Directs world premiere of
Floyd's *Of Mice and Men* at
Seattle Opera

1984

Makes Metropolitan Opera
debut directing *Rinaldo*, the
Met's first Handel work

1988

Appointed artistic director
of the Actors Studio in New
York City

1983

Directs world premiere of
Delius' *Margot La Rouge* at
Opera Theatre of Saint Louis

1988

Named artistic director
of the Juilliard Opera
Center

2007

Directs world premiere of
Thomas Pasatieri's *Frau Margot*,
for which Corsaro wrote the
libretto, at Fort Worth Opera

Selected CDs/DVDs Currently in Circulation

Although Frank Corsaro was not directly involved in these recordings, each work is one that he either helped introduce to the public or with which he has important associations.

Floyd: *Susannah* (VAI) with Curtin, Treigle; conducted by Andersson

Floyd: *Of Mice and Men* (Albany) with Griffey, Hawkins, Futral, Maddalena; conducted by Summers

Janáček: *The Cunning Little Vixen* (Chandos) with Watson, Montague, Allen, Howell; conducted by Rattle

Joplin: *Treemonisha* (Deutsche Grammophon) with Balthrop, Allen, White; conducted by Schuller

Pasatieri: *Frau Margot* (Albany) with Flanagan, Risley, Smith; conducted by Illick

Ravel: *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges* and *L'Heure Espagnole* (Kultur/DVD) with Buchan, Steiger; conducted by Rattle and Edwards





Marilyn Horne

This is an enormous affirmation of a long life in opera and in music. What a special belated birthday present for one who has just become seventy-five. It couldn't be better. I hope that this award will create more and more interest in opera and the NEA. I have held the thought for many years that the United States should have a Secretary of the Arts (Culture) in the Cabinet, and hope that this could add to a growing movement that seems to be in progress towards that end. My deepest thanks to those who chose me.

Opposite: Marilyn Horne (left) and Frederica von Stade in Houston Grand Opera's 1981 production of *La Donna del Lago*. Photo by Jim Caldwell

Above: Marilyn Horne in the title role of Houston Grand Opera's production of *Rinaldo*. Photo by Walt Frerck

Marilyn Horne's voice seems to start at the center of the earth and end in the ether. Combining power, flexibility, and extraordinary musicianship in both opera and recital, Horne set a new standard and expanded the repertoire for generations of mezzo-sopranos to come.

Born in Bradford, Pennsylvania, in 1934, she sang almost as soon as she cut baby teeth. At 20, she made an enduring if invisible impression by dubbing Dorothy Dandridge's singing voice in the movie *Carmen Jones*. In 1956, under the guidance of Robert Craft and Igor Stravinsky, she appeared at the Venice Festival, and soon after joined Germany's Gelsenkirchen Municipal Opera, where she sang a broad range of the (largely soprano) repertoire. She returned home to the United States in 1960 and made her San Francisco Opera debut as Marie in Berg's *Wozzeck*; a year later she made her Lyric Opera of Chicago debut as Lora in the world premiere of Vittorio Giannini's *The Harvest*.

Despite roles in those successful twentieth-century operas, Horne quickly established herself as a brilliant bel canto interpreter, particularly in operas by Handel and Rossini, many of which she rescued from near obscurity. One that had a particularly important part in her career was Handel's *Rinaldo*. She sang the title role in the American premiere at the Houston Grand Opera in 1975. Nine years later, she performed it again at the Metropolitan Opera. It was the first time the company had ever staged a Handel work; coincidentally, the director was Horne's NEA Opera Honors colleague Frank Corsaro.

Among the many other roles—both dramatic and comedic—on which she has left her stamp are Isabella in Rossini's *L'Italiana in Algeri*, Adalgisa in Bellini's *Norma*, Arsace in Rossini's *Semiramide*, the title role in Rossini's *Tancredi*, Rosina in Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, the title role in Bizet's *Carmen*, and Samira in Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles*. Equally celebrated and revered for her concert and recital singing, Horne has graced virtually all of the great opera and

concert stages of the world, including the Metropolitan Opera, La Scala, Covent Garden, and Carnegie Hall.

The winner of innumerable awards—including the National Medal of the Arts (1992), Kennedy Center Honors (1995), and France's *Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres*—she has a second, equally important career as a teacher and guardian of the vocal recital. Through the Marilyn Horne Foundation, which she founded in 1994, more than 100 young singers have received important training in the art of the recital, as well as opportunities to perform. They include some of the greatest vocalists on stage today, including Stephanie Blythe, David Daniels, Michelle DeYoung, Lawrence Brownlee, and Isabelle Bayrakdarian. Hundreds more have participated in the foundation's master classes. Equally important, tens of thousands of schoolchildren across the United States have experienced the joy of classical song through the foundation's educational programs. ■



Photo courtesy of Houston Grand Opera

1934

Born in Bradford, PA

1954

Dubs voice of Dorothy Dandridge in the film *Carmen Jones*

1938

Makes professional debut singing "Believe Me, If All Those Endearing Young Charms" at local political rally

1957

Joins Germany's Gelsenkirchen Municipal Opera



Marilyn Horne in rehearsal of the Metropolitan Opera's production of Meyerbeer's *Le Prophète*. Photo by James Heffernan/Metropolitan Opera



Marilyn Horne in the Metropolitan Opera production of Rossini's *L'Italiana in Algeri*.
Photo courtesy of Metropolitan Opera

1960s

Debuts with San Francisco Opera as Marie in *Wozzeck* (1960); Carnegie Hall as Agnese in *Beatrice di Tenda* opposite Joan Sutherland (1961); Covent Garden as Marie in *Wozzeck* (1964); La Scala as Jocasta in *Oedipus Rex* (1969)

1975

Sings title role in American premiere of *Rinaldo* at Houston Grand Opera

1994

Establishes Marilyn Horne Foundation to preserve and support the art of the vocal recital

1970

Metropolitan Opera debut as Adalgisa in *Norma*

1991

Sings Samira in world premiere of Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles* at the Met

1999

With a performance in Laramie, WY, achieves goal of singing in all 50 states

Selected CDs/DVDs Currently in Circulation

Marilyn Horne is a featured singer on all selections.

Barber, Bernstein, Bolcom: *I Will Breathe a Mountain* (RCA Victor) Sixteen American songs with Martin Katz and the Tokyo String Quartet

Bellini: *Norma* (Decca) with Sutherland, Alexander; conducted by Bonyngne

Bizet: *Carmen* (Deutsche Grammophon) with McCracken, Maliponte, Krause; conducted by Bernstein

Bellini, Donizetti, Gluck, Handel, Rossini, Saint-Saëns and others: *Just for the Record: The Golden Voice* (Decca)

Rossini: *L'Italiana in Algeri* (Deutsche Grammophon/DVD) with Ahlstedt, Montsarlo; conducted by Levine

Rossini: *Semiramide* (Decca) with Sutherland, Clark, Rouleau, Serge; conducted by Bonyngne





Lotfi Mansouri

For me, opera is the greatest art form created by the human mind, and my goal has always been to share it with everyone. It is a magnificent artistic banquet, with something for every taste. This recognition by the NEA is a great validation of opera, and strengthens its position in the cultural landscape. Opera has been my life for more than 50 years. In those years, it has given me some magical and extraordinary experiences. To be recognized and honored in this way by the NEA, to receive the country's highest honor for the art form, is a wonderful finale to my life in opera.

Opposite: San Francisco Opera's production of Previn's *A Streetcar Named Desire*, during Lotfi Mansouri's tenure as general director. Photo by Marty Sohl

Above: Lotfi Mansouri, as stage director, in rehearsal for Houston Grand Opera's production of *Boris Godunov*. Photo by Ava Jean Mears

Lotfi Mansouri led, brilliantly, two of the most important opera companies in North America, and has directed scores of productions throughout the world. But with one act, Mansouri forever changed how audiences experienced the art form: supertitles (translations of foreign language works that are projected above the stage).

He left Tehran, Iran, where he was born in 1929, to travel to the United States and study medicine at University of California, Los Angeles. Very quickly, however, music proved an irresistible attraction. Although Mansouri got a degree in psychology, his heart was in music, and after he saw *Madama Butterfly* at the Hollywood Bowl, he realized his future lay specifically in opera. He began teaching and directing opera at local colleges, and in 1959 became the assistant to director Herbert Graf at the Music Academy of the West. It was a life-changing experience: when Graf became the artistic director of the Zürich Opera, he took Mansouri with him.

From 1960 to 1966, Mansouri perfected his craft as resident stage director

of the Zürich Opera. For the next decade, he served as the head stage director at the Geneva Opera, while also directing productions in Europe and the United States. He was a constant presence at the Santa Fe Opera in the late '60s and early '70s, where he directed a dozen works, from bel canto masterpieces (Rossini's *La Cenerentola*, Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*) to Verdi (*Rigoletto*, *La Traviata*), Puccini (*Tosca*), Strauss (*Der Rosenkavalier*), and Berg (*Wozzeck*).

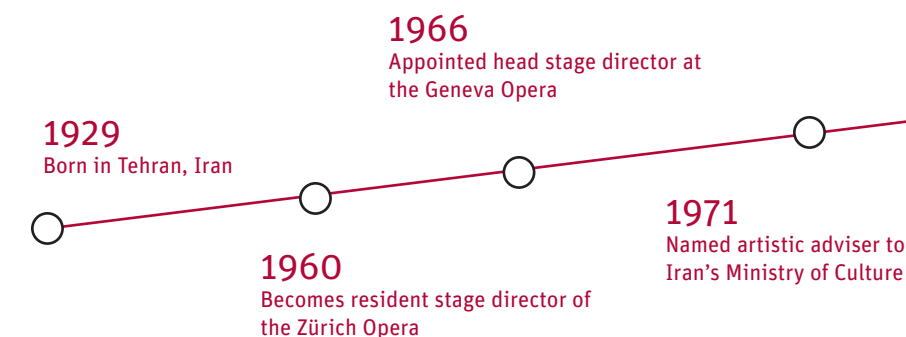
In 1976, Mansouri became general director of the Canadian Opera Company (COC), where he directed operas and introduced Canadian audiences to many works, including Berg's *Lulu* and Britten's *Death in Venice*. While at the COC, he revolutionized opera by presenting supertitles at a 1983 performance of Strauss's *Elektra*. To the enduring gratitude of audiences everywhere, opera companies throughout the world have adopted the idea.

Mansouri moved from Canada to San Francisco in 1988, where he served as general director of the San Francisco Opera until 2001. During his tenure he directed numerous productions. Under his leadership, the company produced its first commercial recordings, including those of Massenet's *Hérodiade* and Stewart Wallace's *Harvey Milk*, and also set up a remarkable exchange program with Russia's Kirov Opera. Perhaps most significant is Mansouri's establishment of the Pacific Visions program to commission new works and to perform little-known works. That project has led to some of the most compelling operas of our time, including John Adams' *The Death of Klinghoffer*, Conrad Susa's *The Dangerous Liaisons*, André Previn's *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*.

Mansouri is a *Chevalier* of France's *Ordre des Arts et des Lettres*, and his autobiography, *Lotfi Mansouri: An Operatic Journey*, will be published in spring 2010. ■



Photo courtesy of Columbia Artists Management, Inc.



The San Francisco Opera's production of Susa's *The Dangerous Liaisons*.
Photo courtesy of San Francisco Opera



The San Francisco Opera's production of Wallace's *Harvey Milk*. Photo courtesy of San Francisco Opera

1976

Becomes general director,
Canadian Opera Company
(COC)

1983

Introduces supertitles with
Elektra at COC

1988

Becomes general director
of the San Francisco Opera
(SFO)

1992

Establishes SFO's Pacific
Visions program to
foster new and unusual
repertoire

1994

Commissions Conrad Susa's
The Dangerous Liaisons,
world premiere at SFO

2000

Commissions Jake Heggie's
Dead Man Walking, world
premiere at SFO

Selected CDs/DVDs Currently in Circulation

Although Lotfi Mansouri was not directly involved in these recordings, each work is one that he helped introduce to the public or with which he has important associations.

Glass: *Satyagraha* (CBS Masterworks) with Perry, Cummings, Liss, Reeve; conducted by Keene

Heggie: *Dead Man Walking* (Erato) with Graham, von Stade, Packard; conducted by Summers

Massenet: *Hérodiade* (Sony) with Domingo, Fleming, Zajick, Pons; conducted by Gergiev

Previn: *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Deutsche Grammophon) with Fleming, Futral, Gilfry, Griffey; conducted by Previn

Strauss: *Elektra* (Decca) with Nilsson, Resnik, Collier, Krause; conducted by Solti

Wallace: *Harvey Milk* (Teldec) with Orth, Very, Bishop, Jacobs, Maddalena; conducted by Runnicles





Julius Rudel

Though I have traveled through many countries and have had the great fortune to conduct in most of the world's great opera houses, I have always considered the United States of America my home. Ever since I arrived in New York in 1938, chased by the Nazis from my childhood home in Vienna, I have been welcomed here and given opportunities I could never have imagined. To be recognized in this way by the National Endowment for the Arts is an honor I will cherish. And it is particularly rewarding to know that the incredible art form that is opera is valued and continues to thrive.

Opposite: Matthew Polenzani as Tamino in the Metropolitan Opera's production of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, orchestra conducted by Julius Rudel. Photo by Ken Howard/Metropolitan Opera

Above: Julius Rudel conducting for the Houston Grand Opera. Photo courtesy of Houston Grand Opera

Julius Rudel took a shoestring company, the New York City Opera, and made it a fearless international contender. Furthermore, and equally important, he promoted and encouraged U.S. opera and U.S. artists at a time when both were in desperate need of cheerleaders.

Though he lived for only 17 years in Vienna, where he was born in 1921, Rudel absorbed its musical traditions and adroitly mixed them with U.S. ones. He arrived in New York City as a teenage refugee, and studied at the Mannes School of Music. In 1943, he joined the newly minted New York City Opera as a rehearsal pianist and soon thereafter made his conducting debut with *The Gypsy Baron*.

In his mid-30s, Rudel became the general director/principal conductor of the New York City Opera. During his 22-year tenure, imaginative programming—from the baroque to the brand-new—was the rule. With assistance from the Ford Foundation, the City Opera mounted contemporary American operas, including Robert Kurka's *The Good Soldier Schweik*, Marc Blitzstein's *Regina*, Douglas

Moore's *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, Dominick Argento's *Miss Havisham's Fire*, and Carlisle Floyd's *Jonathan Wade*. In 1966 Rudel inaugurated the company's new home at Lincoln Center with a five-week season of contemporary opera. Under Rudel, the City Opera presented more than 50 twentieth-century operas, 19 world premieres, and seven U.S. premieres, and their productions were known for putting equal emphasis on drama and music. Among the many great singers and directors who worked with him at the City Opera are Beverly Sills, Plácido Domingo, Samuel Ramey, Shirley Verrett, Norman Treigle, Phyllis Curtin, Sherrill Milnes, Frank Corsaro, Theodore Mann, and Tito Capobianco.

Many companies have benefited from Rudel's guidance. He served as the first artistic director of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC, and also has served as music director for Virginia's Wolf Trap Festival, the Cincinnati May Festival, and the Car-

amoor Festival in Katonah, New York. He also has been music adviser to the Opera Company of Philadelphia, and chairman of the National Opera Institute. From 1979 to 1985, he was the music director of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra and led the ensemble on its first concert tour of the West Coast.

In a career that spans more than six decades and has placed him on podiums throughout the world, Rudel has conducted more than 165 operas, including many at the Metropolitan Opera. His musical scope is enormous, but he is perhaps best appreciated for his efforts to revive Kurt Weill's music, including *Die Bürgschaft*, *Lost in the Stars*, and *Silverlake*. Among Rudel's many honors are the Opera News Award, France's *Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres*, New York City's Handel Medalion, and the Kurt Weill Foundation's Distinguished Achievement Award. ■

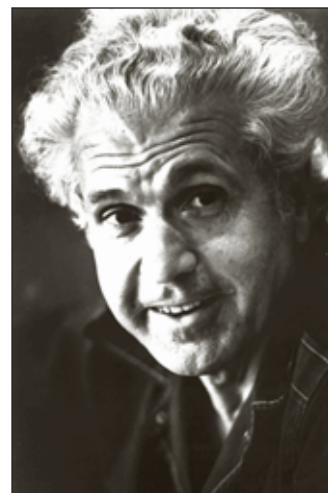


Photo courtesy of Houston Grand Opera

1921

Born in Vienna, Austria

1943

Joins fledgling company, New York City Opera (NYCO), as rehearsal pianist, and makes conducting debut with *The Gypsy Baron* the following year (1944)

1938

Immigrates to the United States and then attends Greenwich House Music School as a scholarship student (1939–40), followed by Mannes College of Music (1940–42)

1957

Named general director/principal conductor of NYCO



Julius Rudel instructs the cast of *Ariadne auf Naxos* during rehearsal for Houston Grand Opera's 1986 production.

Photo by Ava Jean Mears



The New York City Opera production of Mozart's *Così fan tutte*. Photo by Carol Rosegg

1958

Presides over NYCO's season of 10 contemporary American operas

1969

Named music director of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

1979

Becomes music director of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra

1966

Conducts Ginastera's *Don Rodrigo* on NYCO's first night at Lincoln Center

1978

Conducts Massenet's *Werther* in debut at the Metropolitan Opera

1999

Conducts American premiere of Weill's *Die Bürgschaft* at Spoleto Festival USA

Selected CDs/DVDs Currently in Circulation

Julius Rudel is conductor on all selections.

Boito: *Mefistofele* (EMI Classics) with Treigle, Caballé, Domingo

Donizetti: *Roberto Devereux* (VAI/DVD) with Sills, Marsee, Alexander, Fredricks

Handel: *Julius Caesar* (RCA Victor) with Treigle, Sills, Forrester, Wolff

Massenet: *Manon* (Deutsche Grammophon) with Sills, Gedda, Souzay, Bacquier

Various: *Vienna, City of My Dreams* (EMI Classics) with Domingo

Weill: *Die Bürgschaft* (EMI Classics) with Thompson, Daniecki, Travis

2008
NEA Opera Honors
Recipients

Carlisle Floyd (2008 Recipient)

One of the most admired opera composers and librettists of the last half century, Carlisle Floyd speaks in a uniquely American voice, capturing both the cadences and the mores of our society.

Born in Latta, South Carolina, in 1926, Floyd studied both composition and piano. He taught at South Florida University from 1947 to 1976 while actively composing, and in 1976 became the M. D. Anderson Professor of Music at the University of Houston. In Houston, he and David Gockley established the important Houston Grand Opera Studio, which for more than three decades has helped train young artists in the full spectrum of opera. (Graduates include Erie Mills, Denyce Graves, and Joyce Di Donato.)

Floyd's operas are rooted in America, both in subject and in style, and are widely performed in the United States and abroad. They include *Susannah* (1955), *The Passion of Jonathan Wade* (1962; revised, 1990), *Of Mice and Men* (1970), *Bilby's Doll* (1976), *Willie Stark* (1981), and *Cold Sassy Tree* (2000). A 2001 inductee of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, Floyd has received numerous honors, such as a Guggenheim Fellowship and the National Opera Institute's Award for Service to American Opera. He was the first chairman of the NEA's Opera/Musical Theater Panel, which the agency created in 1976. In 2004, the President of the United States awarded him a National Medal of Arts. ■



A scene from *Of Mice and Men*.
Photo by George Hixson, courtesy of
Houston Grand Opera

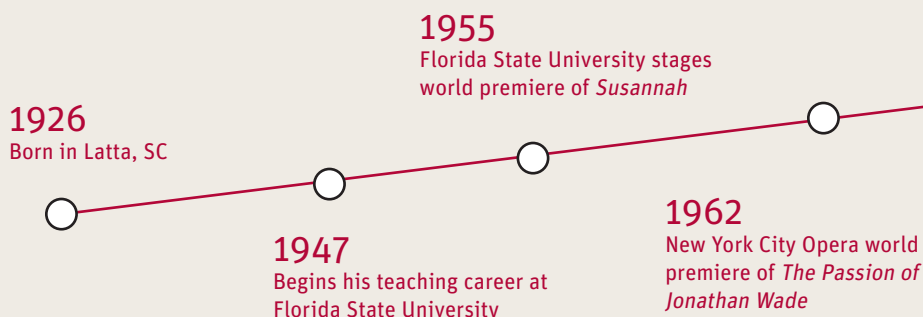




Photo courtesy of Houston Grand Opera

“When I received the call from Chairman Gioia, I was a little stunned. My feeling was not so much that I felt undeserving, but that there were other composers also deserving. I am less stunned now, but no less deeply grateful for being selected for this unique honor.”

1970

Of Mice and Men has premiere at Seattle Opera

1977

Co-founds, with David Gockley, the Houston Grand Opera Studio

1976

Becomes M.D. Anderson Professor of Music at University of Houston

1993

World premiere of *A Time to Dance*, a choral work, at American Choral Directors Association convention in San Antonio

1981

PBS's *Great Performances* presents world premiere of *Willie Stark*

2000

Cold Sassy Tree has world premiere at Houston Grand Opera

Selected CDs/DVDs Currently in Circulation

Carlisle Floyd composed all selections.

Susannah (Virgin Classics) with Studer, Hadley, Ramey; conducted by Nagano

The Sojourner and Mollie Sinclair (VAI) with Neway, Treigle; conducted by Rudel

Markheim (VAI) with Crofoot, Schuh, Treigle; conducted by Andersson

Of Mice and Men (Albany) with Evans and others; conducted by Summers

Willie Stark (DVD: Newport Classic) Louisiana State University production

Cold Sassy Tree (Albany) with Racette and others; conducted by Summers

Richard Gaddes (2008 Recipient)

Richard Gaddes has spent most of his professional life guiding and raising the profile of two important regional American companies, the Santa Fe Opera, from which he retired as general director in 2008, and Opera Theatre of Saint Louis.

Born in Wallsend, England, in 1942 and now a permanent United States resident, Gaddes studied at London's Trinity College of Music. In the '60s, he launched a program of lunchtime concerts by young musicians at Wigmore Hall, an initiative that is emblematic of his work since: in both Santa Fe and Saint Louis, he has championed young singers. In 1969, at the invitation of Santa Fe Opera founder John Crosby, he became the company's artistic administrator. He founded the Opera

Theatre of Saint Louis in 1976 and ran it until 1985, but remained a consultant to Santa Fe. He returned there full-time in 1994, and later succeeded John Crosby as general director.

Throughout his tenure at both companies, Gaddes made a reputation for programming adventurous repertoire both old and new, imaginative casting and productions, building audiences, and spotting young stars before others did. A former vice president of OPERA America, he has served on many arts boards and is, at present, a member of the board of directors of the Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts. His list of honors includes the National Institute for Music Theatre Award and the Young Audiences' Cultural Achievement Award. ■

1942
Born in Wallsend,
England

1976
Founds Opera Theatre of
Saint Louis (OTSL)

1969
Named artistic administrator
of Santa Fe Opera

1982
World premiere at OTSL
of *The Postman Always Rings
Twice*, by Stephen Paulus



Gaddes (right) with Jonathan Miller,
director of *Così fan tutte* at Opera
Theatre of Saint Louis.

Photo by Ken Howard, courtesy
of Opera Theatre of Saint Louis



Photo by Ken Howard,
courtesy of Santa Fe Opera

“It’s rewarding, but also humbling, to be part of this quartet of recipients, the other three of whom are icons in the world of opera. The job of an impresario differs so much from that of composers, conductors, and singers. In my case it is the magnificent work of the Santa Fe Opera family—staff, performers, and technicians—that is being recognized with me. I am indeed grateful to the National Endowment for the Arts for this honor.”

1985

Joruri, by Japanese composer Minoru Miki, has world premiere at OTSL

2000

Becomes general director of Santa Fe Opera

2005

Oswaldo Golijov's *Ainadamar*, with a reworked libretto, presented in Santa Fe

1994

Returns to Santa Fe Opera as associate director

2003

Madame Mao, by Bright Sheng, has world premiere in Santa Fe

2006

American premiere of Thomas Adès's *The Tempest* in Santa Fe

Selected CDs/DVDs Currently in Circulation

While Richard Gaddes is not associated with these recordings, the following works represent those that he has helped to introduce or bring to the attention of American opera audiences.

Rameau: *Pigmalion* (Virgin Classics Veritas) with Fournié, Fouchécourt; conducted by Niquet

Bretón: *La Verbena de la Paloma* (DVD Decca) with Lopez, Suárez; conducted by Roa

Britten: *Albert Herring* (Naxos) with Palmer, Barstow, Lloyd, Finley; conducted by Bedford

Britten: *Owen Wingrave* (DVD Kultur Video) with Barstow, Finley; conducted by Nagano

Janáček: *The Cunning Little Vixen* (Decca) with Popp; conducted by Mackerras

Golijov: *Ainadamar* (DG) with Upshaw; conducted by Spano

James Levine (2008 Recipient)

Since he first took the podium at the Metropolitan Opera in 1971, James Levine has conducted nearly 2,500 performances there—a record number—and his repertoire is equally staggering: 85 operas. He is noted for his collaboration with singers, but equally important is his work with the Met orchestra, which he has fine-tuned into one of the world's leading ensembles.

Born in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1943, Levine excelled as a pianist even in childhood. Setting his course as a conductor, he graduated from Juilliard in 1964, and in that same year was invited by George Szell to join the Cleveland Orchestra as the youngest assistant conductor in its long history. Over the next several years, he led many orchestras, including the Metropolitan Opera's, and in 1975 became the company's music director. He has led Met premieres of works by numerous composers, including Mozart, Verdi, Stravinsky, Berg, Schoenberg, Rossini, Berlioz, and Weill, as well as the world premieres of two American operas, John Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles* and John Harbison's *The Great Gatsby*.

While maintaining his position at the Met, Levine has continued to work as an accompanist and chamber musician and has led orchestras around the world. From 1973 to 1993, he was music director of the Ravinia Festival, the summer residence of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra; from 1999 to 2004, he was chief conductor of the Munich Philharmonic. In 2004, Levine became music director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, a post he continues to hold. With the BSO, he has introduced new works by such composers as Elliott Carter, William Bolcom, Milton Babbitt, Charles Wuorinen, and John Harbison.

Among the numerous awards Levine has received are the Gold Medal for Service to Humanity from the National Institute of Social Sciences and the American Academy of Arts and Letters' 2005 award for Distinguished Service to the Arts. In 1997, the President of the United States awarded him a National Medal of Arts and, in 2003, he was a recipient of the Kennedy Center Honors. ■

1943

Born in Cincinnati, OH

1964

Invited by George Szell to become assistant conductor of the Cleveland Orchestra

1953

Debuts as piano soloist with Cincinnati Orchestra playing Mendelssohn's *Piano Concerto No. 2*

1971

Conducts *Tosca* in Metropolitan Opera debut



Stephen Portman, George Szell, Michael Charry, and Levine (left to right). Photo by Peter Hastings, courtesy of the Cleveland Orchestra Archives



Photo by Peter Hastings, courtesy of the Cleveland Orchestra Archives

“In the years since its inception, the National Endowment for the Arts has contributed enormously to the health and growth of the arts in the United States. It is a great honor for me to be among the first recipients of this award, and an honor to the art form itself that the NEA is recognizing the important place of opera in the artistic life of this country.”

1976

Appointed music director of the Metropolitan Opera

1977

Inaugurates *Metropolitan Opera Presents* on television, conducting *La Bohème*

1980

Founds the Met's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program

1991

Conducts world premiere of John Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles* at the Met

1999

Leads first Met performance of Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron*

2004

While remaining at the Met, becomes Boston Symphony Orchestra music director

Selected CDs/DVDs Currently in Circulation

James Levine is conductor on all selections.

Wagner: *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (CD and DVD; DG) with the Metropolitan Opera

Strauss: *Elektra* (DVD; DG) with Nilsson, Rysanek

Tchaikovsky: *Eugene Onegin* (DG) with Burchuladze, Freni, von Otter, T. Allen

Berlioz: *Les Troyens* (DVD; DG) with Norman, Troyanos, Domingo

Corigliano: *The Ghosts of Versailles* (DVD; DG) with Stratas, Fleming, Horne, Clark, G. Quilico, Hagegard (*currently not in circulation*)

Liebersohn: *Neruda Songs* (Nonesuch) with Hunt Liebersohn

Leontyne Price (2008 Recipient)

There are very few singers with voices that are as instantly recognizable, and revered, as the rich, creamy lyric soprano of Leontyne Price. She continues to be a powerful advocate not only for the art she loves, but for human rights.

Born in Laurel, Mississippi, in 1927, Price played the piano early on and soon began to sing at church and school. When she was nine years old, she heard Marian Anderson in concert; that, Price has said, “was what you might call the original kickoff” for her pursuit of what became an astonishing vocal career. Although her 1961 debut as Leonora in Verdi’s *Il Trovatore* at the Metropolitan Opera instantly made her a legend—and landed her on the cover of *Time* magazine—she was already well known to opera audiences in cities such as San Francisco and Vienna (where, at the invitation of Herbert von Karajan, she made her debut as Aida in 1959).

Price has made a long career in opera, concert, and recital. Though she is best known as a Verdi and Puccini singer, she has always embraced the work of American composers, particularly Samuel Barber. She gave the premiere of his *Hermit Songs* at New York City’s Town Hall in 1954, with the composer at the piano, and Barber went on to write many pieces for her.

In 1997, Price introduced children to one of opera’s greatest heroines in her book *Aida*. Her scores of awards include the Presidential Medal of Freedom (1964), the Kennedy Center Honors (1980), the National Medal of the Arts (1985), the National Association of Black Broadcasters Award (2002), the French Order of Arts and Letters, the Italian Order of Merit, 19 Grammys, and three Emmys. ■

1927

Born in Laurel, MS

1955

Performs title role of *Tosca* for broadcast on a major television network, NBC

1936

Hears Marian Anderson in Jackson, MS

1957

San Francisco Opera debut as Madame Lidoine in American premiere of Poulenc’s *Dialogues of the Carmelites*



Price in the title role of *Aida*.
Photo courtesy of Lyric Opera
of Chicago



Photo courtesy of Lyric Opera of Chicago

“This award is visible evidence to the world of the esteem in which we as a nation hold opera. It was a long journey from my hometown of Laurel, Mississippi, to the capital of the greatest country in the world. I thank everyone who was involved in my selection and I share this recognition with everyone who helped me along the way. They have my sincerest thanks and appreciation. I am still almost speechless.”

1958

Vienna Staatsoper debut in title role of *Aida*

1966

At the opening of the new Met, sings world premiere of Barber's *Antony and Cleopatra*

1997

Publishes *Aida*, a book for children

1961

Metropolitan Opera debut as Leonora in *Il Trovatore*

1973

Sings at the funeral of former President Lyndon B. Johnson

2001

Makes a special appearance to sing at Carnegie Hall memorial concert for victims of 9/11

Selected CDs/DVDs Currently in Circulation

Leontyne Price is a featured singer on all selections.

Puccini: *Tosca* (Decca) with Di Stefano; conducted by Karajan

Verdi: *Aida* (RCA) with Bumbry, Domingo, Milnes; conducted by Leinsdorf

Puccini: *Madama Butterfly* (RCA) with Elias, Tucker; conducted by Leinsdorf

Verdi: *Requiem* (Decca) with Elias, Bjoerling, Tozzi; conducted by Reiner

Leontyne Price Sings Barber (RCA)
Hermit Songs with Barber at the piano,
Knoxville: Summer of 1915, among others;
conducted by Schippers

Right as the Rain (RCA) with Previn as conductor and pianist; popular classic songs by Arlen, Rodgers, Previn, among others





NEA Support of Opera

The National Endowment for the Arts is dedicated to bringing the best of the arts to all Americans. Established by Congress in 1965, the NEA is an independent agency of the federal government and is the nation's largest annual funder of the arts. The Arts Endowment's grants and programs bring both new and established art to people in all 50 states including rural areas, inner cities, and military bases. Since its inception, the NEA has awarded more than 130,000 grants totaling more than \$4 billion.

The creation of the NEA Opera Honors constituted a milestone in the agency's long history of support for opera. Beginning in 1967, only the second year of its grantmaking activities, the NEA awarded a \$150,000 grant to the Metropolitan Opera National Company, a satellite of the Metropolitan Opera. Since then, the NEA has awarded nearly 4,500 grants to opera companies, artists, and organizations, totaling more than \$167 million. Activities supported with NEA funds include young artists' programs, broadcasts of television and radio programs, and initiatives such as the NEA's Great American Voices. The catalytic effect of this support is reflected in the growth of opera companies, from 46 companies in 1965 to more than 200 companies in 2009.

Key to the agency's history of opera support was the New American Works program, which from 1980 to 1995 awarded more than 600 grants totaling \$9.5 million to assist in the creation of new work. Among the operas made possible through this program are Anthony Davis' *Amistad*, John Adams' *Nixon in China*, William Bolcom's *A View from the*

Bridge, and Philip Glass' *Appomattox*. The NEA continues to fund the creation of new work through its grant categories.

The NEA also provided grants for professional development of emerging artists, funding programs such as the Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center (Chicago), the Houston Grand Opera Studio, and Merola Opera Program (San Francisco). Among the alumni of these programs are Dawn Upshaw, Nathan Gunn, and Denyce Graves. The NEA also has been a longstanding funder of television and radio broadcasts of opera, including such lauded programs as *The Metropolitan Opera Presents* (formerly *Live from the Met*), *Great Performances*, and NPR's *World of Opera*.

The NEA both sustains and develops large scale projects with significant national reach. Through the support of the NEA, OPERA America launched the Opera Fund, which, in its first three years, awarded 50 grants and nearly \$1 million to provide for the creation and production of new work. The NEA created the national initiative Great American Voices: Military Base Tour that from July 2005 to November 2006 featured 24 professional opera companies performing at 39 military bases across the country. The NEA Opera Honors created in 2008 is the latest in a long line of NEA programs designed to foster the growth of the art form in the United States.

Soprano Sondra Radvanovsky sings with the Washington National Opera Orchestra, conducted by Plácido Domingo, during the 2008 NEA Opera Honors awards ceremony. Photo by Russell Hirshon

NEA Process Making A Nomination

For the first time in 25 years, Congress authorized a new award to recognize lifetime achievement and individual excellence: the National Endowment for the Arts Opera Honors. This award honors visionaries and luminaries who, by making extraordinary contributions to opera in the United States, have become cultural treasures of this great nation. It represents the highest recognition that our nation bestows in opera.

The NEA Opera Honors pay tribute to those visionary creators, extraordinary performers, and other interpreters who have made a lasting impact on our national cultural landscape, based either on a lifetime of artistic achievements or a single, uniquely valuable accomplishment. Nominees may include composers, librettists, singers, conductors, designers, and directors. In special circumstances, collaborative artistic teams may be nominated to acknowledge an exemplary American opera that has generated excitement, attracted audiences, and demonstrated potential for expanding the canon of the American opera repertoire. The NEA Opera Honors also will recognize individuals whose mastery has advanced the knowledge and/or appreciation of opera for the general public. Awards will be \$25,000 each and may be received once in a lifetime. A very limited number will be made.

HOW TO SUBMIT A NOMINATION

Recipients of the NEA Opera Honors are selected on the basis of nominations from the public. Nominations may be for individuals or for a group of individuals (e.g., a collaborative artistic team). Nominees must be citizens or permanent residents of the United States. Posthumous nominations will not be considered. Nominations must be submitted online at the Arts Endowment's website at <http://www.nea.gov/honors/opera/nomination.html>. An individual may submit one nomination per year. No one may nominate him/herself.

REVIEW OF NOMINATIONS

The selection criteria for the NEA Opera Honors are the artistic excellence and significance of a nominee's contributions to opera and the lasting impact on our national cultural landscape. Nominations are reviewed by an advisory panel of opera experts and at least one knowledgeable layperson. Panel recommendations are forwarded to the National Council on the Arts, which then makes recommendations to the Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts. The Chairman reviews the Council's recommendations and makes the final decision on a limited number of award recipients. If not selected for an NEA Opera Honors award, nominees will be placed on the following year's nominations list and will remain there for up to four years. Please contact Georgianna Paul, Opera Specialist, 202/682-5600 or paulg@arts.gov with any questions.

For complete details about the NEA Opera Honors and the NEA Opera Honorees, visit <http://www.nea.gov/honors/opera>.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The National Endowment for the Arts wishes to acknowledge the 110th Congress of the United States for the enabling legislation to create the NEA Opera Honors.

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For their role in imagining, creating, and implementing the NEA Opera Honors and for their contributions to the publication, we extend our heartfelt thanks to these individuals: Katrine Ames, Wayne S. Brown, Peter G. Davis, Mary Lou Falcone, Veronique Firkusny, Victoria Hutter, JoAnn LaBrecque-French, Ted Libbey, Georgianna Paul, Michelle Pendoley, Marc A. Scorca, Jan Stunkard, Mark Weinstein, and K Williams; as well as the staff of OPERA America, Washington National Opera, and the Harman Center for the Arts for producing the awards ceremony.

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For adding their essential perspectives to create the video tributes of the NEA Opera Honorees, we wish to acknowledge: Deborah Borda, Tyne Daly, Cori Ellison, Will Ferguson, Renée Fleming, Carlisle Floyd, Peter Gelb, David Gockley, Jake Heggie, Barbara Hoher, Lee Hoiby, Martin Katz, James Levine, Bill Mason, Christopher Mattaliano, Mark Morris, Eric Owens, André Previn, Samuel Ramey, Jessica Rivera, Peter Sellars, Michael Tilson Thomas, Shirley Verrett, Frederica von Stade, and Stephen Wadsworth; and for direction and production: Joe Alvarez, Cara Consilvio, Connie Dubinski, Greg Emetaz, Olivia Giovetti, Jessie Hinkle, Brittney Redler, and Traci Schanke.

...

For providing their expertise as panelists for the NEA Opera Honors initiative, we are appreciative of: Carmen Balthrop, Harolyn Blackwell, Sarah Billingham, Carlisle Floyd, Richard Gaddes, Rodney Hood, Speight Jenkins, Plato Karayanis, Mado Lie, William Mason, and Mark Swed.

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For providing print, video, audio, and website materials, we are deeply grateful to: Canadian Opera Company, Chicago Opera Theater, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, Fort Worth Opera, Harvard University, Houston Grand Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Mannes College of Music, Lotfi Mansouri, The Marilyn Horne Foundation, The Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, Nonesuch Records, Carol Rosegg, San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and San Francisco Opera.



CREDITS

Published by the National Endowment for the Arts
Office of Public Affairs
Jamie Bennett, *Director*
Don Ball, *Publications Manager/Editor*

Thanks to Georgianna Paul for editorial assistance and to the OPERA America staff for obtaining the images for this publication.

Design by Nancy Bratton Design, Washington, DC

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October 2009

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